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ABSTRACT

Illustrations of familiar birds of the northwest United States and suggestions for attracting them to urban settings are offered in this publication. Foods (plants) that are preferred by these birds are also identified. Explanations are given for each plant's ornamental value; time in bloom and in fruit; height; adaptations; and also the number of bird species that use it. Practical ideas are outlined for attracting birds to homes and gardens. These include suggestions related to water areas, screens and fences, open areas, windbreaks, food plots and feeders, bird boxes and baths. A model for creating a landscape design is offered and illustrated. A list of pamphlets on plants, soils, and conservation methods is also provided. (ML)

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Invite birds to your home

CONSERVATION PLANTINGS FOR THE NORTHWEST

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Invite birds to your home

By L. Dean Marriage, biologist, SCS

Many of us enjoy having birds and other wildlife around our homes. Their striking colors and pleasing songs appeal to our eyes and ears. Conservation plantings in your yard, whether it is large or small, can help attract more kinds of birds.

More than 100 different kinds of birds are common in the Northwest. A surprising variety and number can be seen in suburban yards and gardens, especially those that have the kinds of trees, shrubs, and flowers that attract birds. If bird feeders and baths are part of the landscaping, your home becomes even more inviting to birds.

This booklet is useful for Washington and Oregon and in California north of San Francisco. Plants described have bird appeal and are good soil and water conserving plants as well. Most of them are better suited for use west of the Cascade Mountains and the Sierra Nevada than in the drier areas east of the mountains.

Plants and birds illustrated are not to scale, but bird sizes are approximately proportional to each other. Birds were painted by Lee LeBlanc of Iron River, Mich.

COVER: Steller's jays on hemlock

Mourning doves—parent and young

Consider the birds' needs

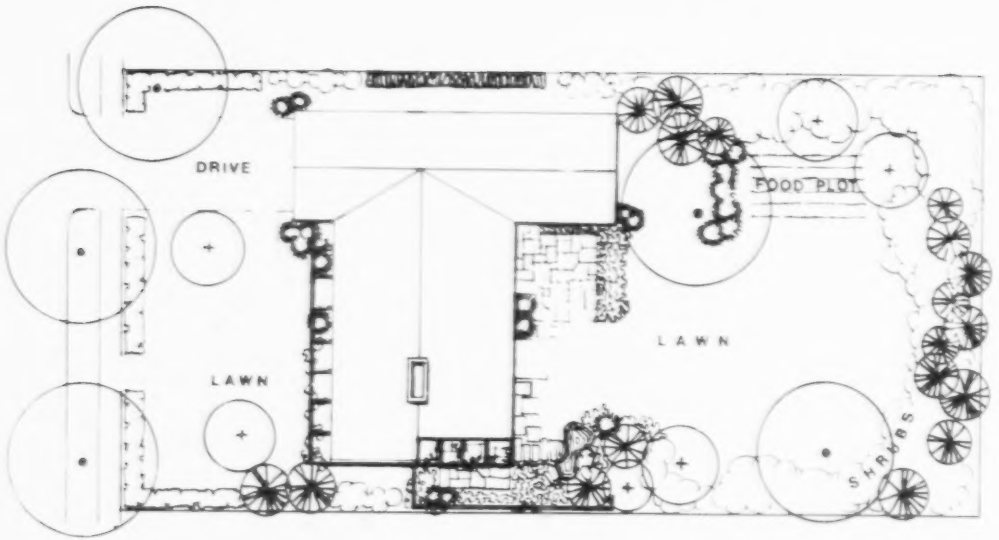
Birds need places to feed, sing, court, nest, rest, and hide. They like a choice of places for these activities—from crowns of tall trees to low-growing flowers and grasses. They also like a choice of foods —seeds, fruits, berries, and flower nectar. You can help meet these needs with conservation plantings. Many songbirds combine plant foods with insects, caterpillars, earthworms, and spiders.

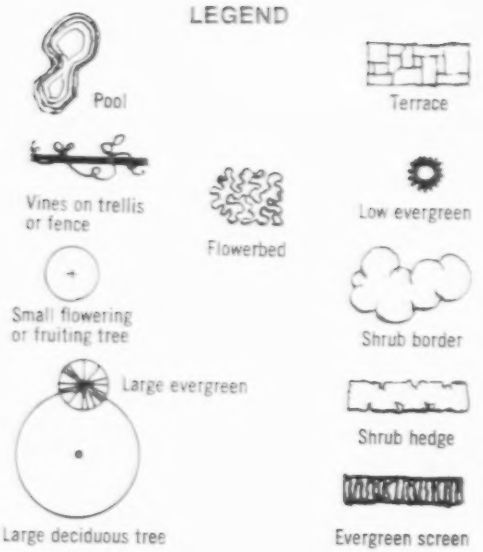
With more plants and a greater diversity of plant species and heights, you can attract more kinds of birds. Plants of varying heights are especially important. If you want to attract certain birds or groups of birds, find out their particular food and cover preferences so you can select appropriate trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, flowers, and other plants. The table on page 7 shows some of the plants preferred as sources of food by many of our Northwest birds.

Choose plants for wildlife value

Unfortunately, many common shade trees and landscape shrubs yield little food for birds. Consider the bird appeal of the plants now in or bordering your yard and make needed additional plantings. Yards that have only deciduous trees and shrubs can be improved by adding pines, junipers, cedars, yews, and other evergreens that provide winter shelter for birds. Fruit-bearing shrubs and trees are helpful additions you can plant.

Not all plants are in flower or in fruit at the same time. By selecting species with staggered flowering and fruiting periods, you can have a succession of floral displays and bird foods throughout much of the year. By intermingling different species, shapes, and sizes, you can create varied and attractive landscaping patterns.





Create a landscape design

Your landscaping should consider the many uses of your property. Plantings for wildlife should be along the margins of the house and lot. This allows open space for human activities, yet provides an attractive setting for birds.

This landscape design, by John Frey, Lexington, Mass., shows one way to vary plantings on a city or suburban lot of about one-third acre. For a lot of this size, 20 to 25 different plant species are optimum. On smaller lots, only single plants of several species may be feasible. With a much larger lot, a greater variety of plants plus hedges, screens, food plots, and other massed plantings is possible. Avoid plants needing repeated applications of pesticides.

In general, trees and shrubs that attract birds grow satisfactorily on well-drained, fairly fertile, loamy soils. The ideal soil has a loose, loamy upper layer 18 inches or more deep. A neutral or slightly acid reaction is preferable. Trees and shrubs should be planted where their roots will not interfere with masonry structures.

Use flowers and other annuals to increase the kinds of bird food, to balance landscape spacing, and to fill in along walls and other structures. A small pool or pond will further enhance your yard's attractiveness for you and your birds. Cutting a small clearing into the margin or in the middle of a wooded area creates an edge effect that birds like.

Be sure your landscaping allows you to see the birds, perhaps from a window, patio, or terrace.

Ways of attracting birds

Water areas.—Birds need water for drinking and bathing. Maybe your yard permits the addition of a small pool with rocks in its shallow edges. Birds use the dry tops of rocks for preening sites after bathing. By landscaping the pool area with conifers, hedges, and clumps of shrubs, you also provide resting, nesting, and feeding sites. Conventional bird baths are also helpful.

Screens and fences.—Living fences of honeysuckle or fruit-bearing shrubs, such as cotoneaster, Russian-olive, or holly, can cover or even replace wire fences along property lines. Towhees, wrens, and sparrows find living fences ideal homes. Rows of conifers and large shrubs can screen off an unpleasant view while lowering noise levels. They attract birds yet offer privacy for other backyard activities.

Open areas.—Robins, meadowlarks, and some sparrows favor open stretches of lawns and fields with few, if any, trees or shrubs. In seldom-mowed open areas, try planting a variety of native grasses. Grasses protect the soil against erosion and provide food and cover for wildlife.

Windbreaks.—Junipers, spruces, or pines, with a crabapple tree tucked in on the sheltered side, give birds a warm, safe place to rest when the snow is deep and the wind is blowing. In the spring, windbreaks provide nesting sites. They also provide some weather protection for the house.

Food plots.—A food plot helps keep the birds with you during the winter months. Jays, finches, juncos, and sparrows are attracted by sunflowers, millets, cereal grains, and corn. Plots can be single plants, several short rows, or massed plantings, depending on your space.

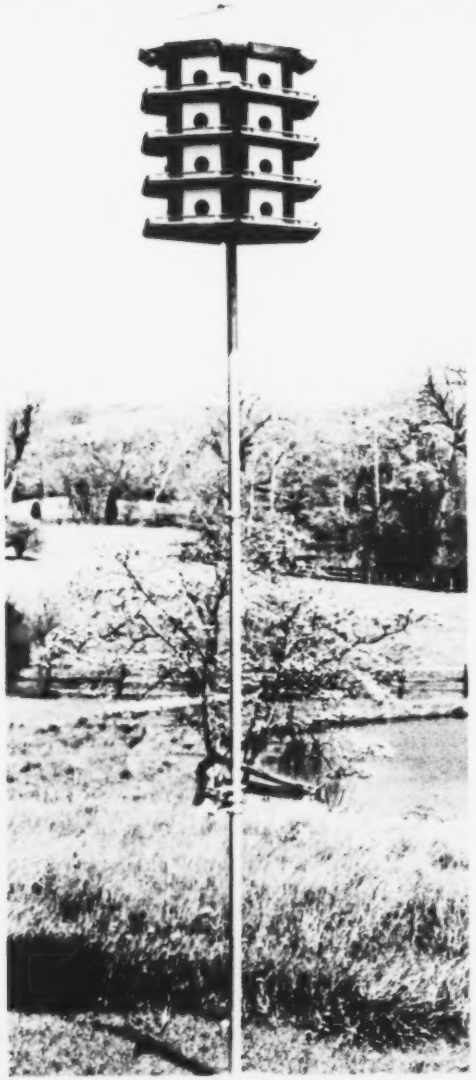
Foods Preferred by Familiar Birds

PLANTS	BIRDS														
	Grouse, pheasants, and quail	Band-tailed pigeons	Woodpeckers	Steller's and scrub jays	Chickadees, bushtits, and nuthatches	Robins	Thrushes and bluebirds	Cedar waxwings	Orioles and tanagers	Black-headed grosbeaks	Evening grosbeaks	Purple, Cassin's, and house finches	Goldfinches and siskins	Rufous-sided and brown towhees	Juncos and sparrows
Blackberries	◑	◑	○	◑	○	◑	◑		○	◑	◑	u		●	○
Cascaras		◑	○	u	u	◑	◑	u		u	○	u	u	○	u
Cherries	◑	◑	◑	◑	u	●	◑	●	◑	●	●	◑		○	u
Crabapples	○	○	◑	◑	○	●	○	◑	○	○	◑	●		u	
Dogwoods	◑	○	◑	○	u	◑	◑	◑	u	u	◑	○			u
Elderberries	○	●	◑	●	◑	●	●	◑	○	●	○	○	○	◑	○
Firethorns	u		u	u		◑	○	◑				○			○
Grapes	○	○	◑	○	u	●	●	◑	◑			◑		○	○
Hawthorns	◑	u	○	u		●	u	◑	u	○	◑	○			○
Hollies	○	u	○	u		●	◑	○				u		u	
Junipers	○		u			○	u	u			○	u			
Mountain-ashes	○		u			◑	u	◑	○		◑	u			
Russian-olive	○					◑	u	○		u	◑				
Serviceberries	○		○	○	u	◑	◑	○	◑	○	○	u	○	◑	
Snowberries	◑				u	○	○			u	◑	u		○	
Sunflowers	◑	○	u	◑	●					○	●	◑	●	○	●

Insects around plantings attract vireos, warblers, wrens, flycatchers, kinglets, swallows, and martins. Grasses and weeds attract many seedeating birds. Sugar-water feeders in conjunction with flowers of salvia, evergreen huckleberry, red-flowering currant, and the columbines and fuchsias attract hummingbirds. Other plants especially attractive to birds include madrone, cotoneaster, salal, highbush cranberry, huckleberries, blueberries, currants, gooseberries, maples, oaks, and other "mast" trees.

Groups of birds usually have similar plant food habits, although individual bird preferences and extent of use may vary. Preference ratings for the plants were based on data from food-habit studies, but actual plant use by birds varies by season and situation.

● Choice ◑ Good ○ Fair u Used, amount not determined



Swallow or martin nest house

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Feeders, bird boxes, and baths.—In order to provide a year-round food supply plus a variety of nest sites, you may need to set up bird feeders and nest boxes. These are available from pet shops, department stores, and feed and seed stores. Or you can build your own.

Feeders and boxes should blend with the landscape. They need not be expensive or elaborate. The simpler and more natural they look, the better they are. They need to be protected from climbing animals: suspending them from a branch or setting them on a post with a metal shield are two protective measures.

After the birds become accustomed to visiting a feeder in winter, they often will use it during other seasons if it is frequently stocked.

Several types of feeders should increase the bird variety: woodpeckers and nuthatches like suet in wire cages; finches like open trays of seed; mockingbirds, thrushes, and orioles go for dried fruits impaled on nails. Scattering food on the ground will attract ground-feeding birds, such as towhees, sparrows and juncos.

Nesting boxes and shelves attract several kinds of birds, such as wrens and bluebirds. The types of boxes to choose depend on what species nest in your neighborhood.

Bird baths of a somber color atop a pedestal or placed on the ground are excellent means of providing songbirds the fresh water they need. Wide shallow pans of water will also do. Plan to have some shrubby cover near the bath, but avoid ground plantings as they increase

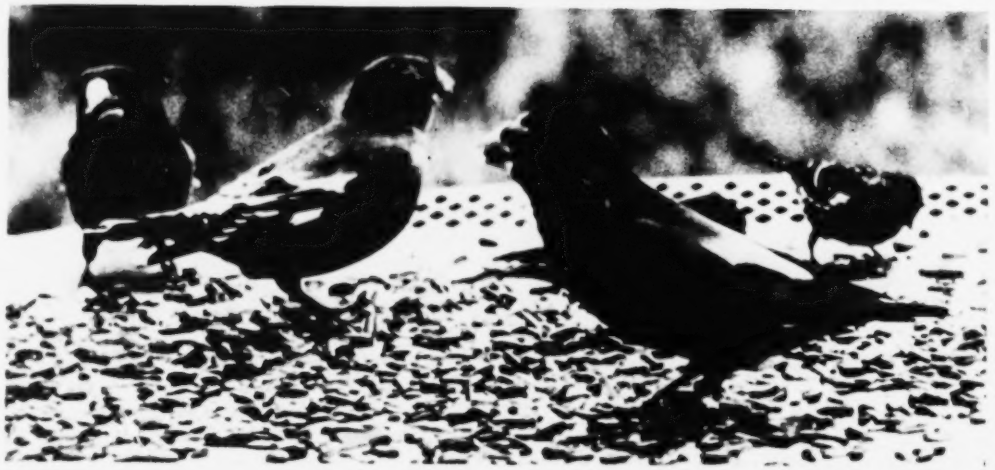
Purple finch (upper); evening grosbeaks and pine siskin

the predation danger from cats. Having water at several heights will increase the kinds of birds attracted to your yard.

The basic resources . . . soil and water

When planting for birds, you need to consider such things as soil, slope, drainage, shade and exposure, and climate, as well as your personal wishes.

When your house, sidewalk, and driveway were built, the normal pattern of water flow was changed and likely the runoff rate has increased. Using the plants described plus careful landscape planning can help control soil erosion and water runoff. Planting on the contour adds natural beauty in pleasing patterns and also helps conserve the soil and water resources.



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Familiar Birds of the Northwest

by Le Blanc

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW
on raspberry

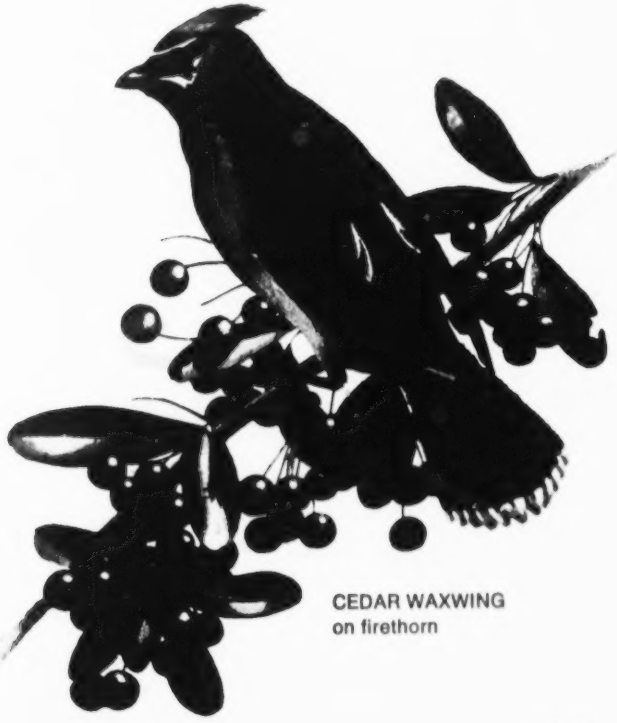
PURPLE FINCH
on tray feeder

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE
on crabapple

RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE
on typical ground cover

ROBIN
on cherry

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD
on typical perch



CEDAR WAXWING
on firethorn

EVENING GROSBEAK
on maple

OREGON (DARK-EYED) JUNCO
on pine

Plants for birds, beauty, and protection

HAWTHORN
***Crataegus* spp.**

Bird use: 23 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; deciduous trees, 15–30 ft. tall; pale-green leaves; abundant white flowers in clusters; persistent orange to red fruit
Adaptations: Moderately deep to deep, well-drained, porous soils; sun to partial shade; cold and drought tolerant
In bloom: May-June
In fruit: October-March
Sources: Commercial nurseries

SNOWBERRY
***Symphoricarpos* spp.**

Bird use: 19 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; deciduous shrubs, 1–6 ft. high; small white or pink flowers in clusters; white or reddish fruit, sometimes waxy
Adaptations: Wide range of moderately well drained to well drained soils but prefers deep loam; sun to partial shade; cold and drought tolerant
In bloom: June-July
In fruit: September through winter
Sources: Commercial nurseries, stem and root cuttings

SALVIA
***Salvia* spp.**
Scarlet sage illus.

Bird use: Hummingbirds
Ornamental values: Annual and perennial plants, 1–5 ft. high; deep blue, purple, or bright-red, tubular flowers, often in dense spikes
Adaptations: Wide range of well-drained soils; sun to partial shade
In bloom: July-October
Sources: Commercial seed stores

MOUNTAIN-ASH
***Sorbus* spp.**

Bird use: 21 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; trees, 20–40 ft. tall; compound leaves; white flowers in flat clusters; bright-red to orange fruit in clusters
Adaptations: Wide range of soil conditions but prefers moist, porous soils; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant
In bloom: May-June
In fruit: August-March
Sources: Commercial nurseries, seedlings

CASCARA
***Rhamnus* spp.**

Bird use: of fruit, 19 species; of insects on plants, 40 more species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; large deciduous shrubs to small trees, 20–40 ft. tall; prominently veined, dark-green leaves, yellow in fall; shiny black fruit in clusters
Adaptations: Well-drained, fertile soils; needs much moisture; sun to dense shade; moderately cold tolerant
In bloom: May
In fruit: August-September
Sources: Wilding transplants

CRABAPPLE
***Malus* spp.**

Bird use: 33 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; deciduous trees, 10–30 ft. tall; showy white, pink, or red flowers; red, purple, orange, or yellow fruit
Adaptations: Wide range of well-drained soils; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant
In bloom: April-May
In fruit: August-November
Sources: Commercial nurseries, grafting, budding

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SUNFLOWER
***Helianthus* spp.**

Bird use: 53 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; annual or perennial plants, 4–8 ft. high; large, showy yellow flowers; size of seed-filled disks varies with species; needs careful placement for good landscaping
Adaptations: Wide range of soil conditions; sun; moderately cold and drought tolerant
In bloom: June-August
Ripe seed: August-September
Sources: Commercial seed stores, harvested wild seed

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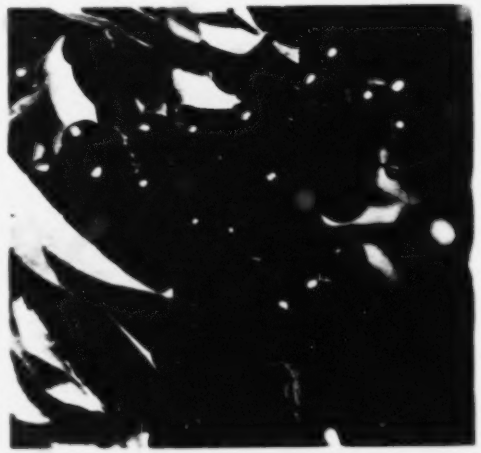
WILD CHERRY
***Prunus* spp.**
Chokecherry illus.

Bird use: 44 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; deciduous shrubs to small trees to 20 ft. tall; yellow leaves in fall; showy white flower clusters or drooping spikes; small dark-purple fruit
Adaptations: Wide range of moderately well drained to well drained soils but prefers moderately deep to deep loam; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant; moderately drought tolerant
In bloom: April-May
In fruit: September-October
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants

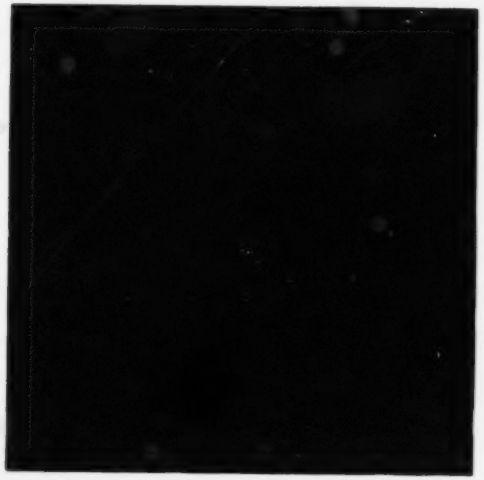


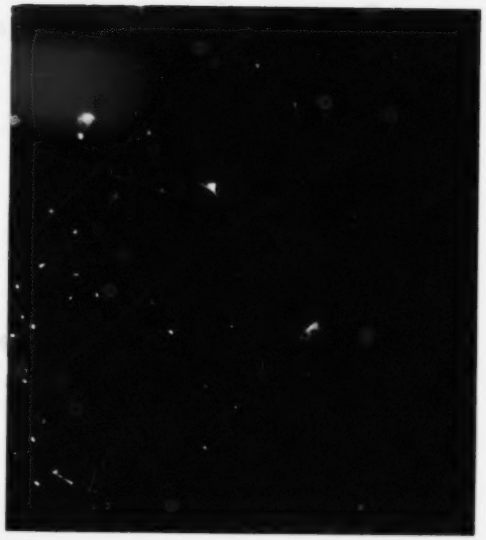
DOGWOOD
***Cornus* spp.**
Pacific dogwood illus.

Bird use: 41 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; perennials, 6–9 in. high, shrubs, 3–15 ft., trees, 15–60 ft.; deciduous leaves red to brown in fall; small to large flowers in showy white to yellow, flat clusters or bunched inside showy, creamy bracts; red, blue, or white fruits bunched or clustered
Adaptations: Wide range of moderately well drained soils; sun to partial shade; not drought tolerant; cold tolerant
In bloom: April-June
In fruit: August-March
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants

ELDERBERRY
***Sambucus* spp.**
Blue elderberry illus.

Bird use: 62 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; small deciduous shrubs to small trees, 1–50 ft. tall; fast-growing and spreading but prunable; white or creamy flowers in flat-topped clusters; blue or red fruits in showy clusters
Adaptations: Wide range of well-drained soils; sun to partial shade; not drought tolerant
In bloom: April-August
In fruit: August-October
Sources: Commercial nurseries, root cuttings



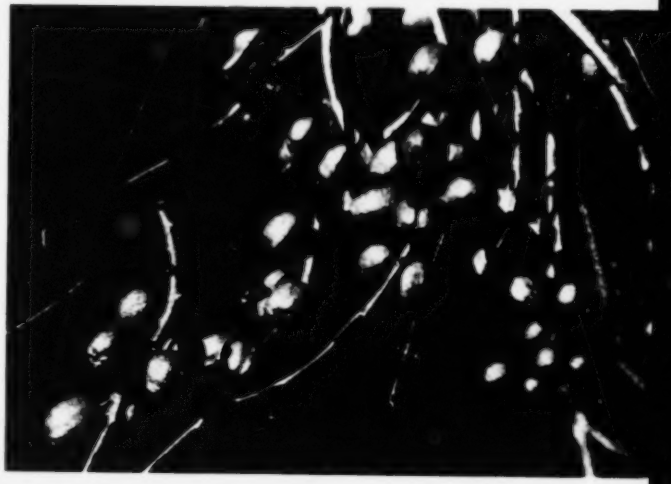


HOLLY
***Ilex* spp.**

Bird use: 24 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; evergreen shrubs, 1–15 ft. high, to trees, 30–50 ft.; dark-green or variegated leaves; small whitish flowers; persistent bright-red, orange, yellow, or black fruit
Adaptations: Well-drained, fertile loamy soils; sun to shade; not cold or drought tolerant
In bloom: April-June
In fruit: September-April
Sources: Commercial nurseries, seedlings

RUSSIAN-OLIVE
Elaeagnus angustifolia

Bird use: 20 species
Ornamental values: Deciduous shrub or small tree, 15–25 ft. tall; introduced species widely established in dry sites; gray-green foliage is silvery below; small fragrant flowers; persistent silvery-yellow to pink fruit
Adaptations: Wide range of soil conditions; tolerates moderate alkalinity and a high water table; sun to partial shade; cold and drought tolerant
In bloom: May-June
In fruit: October-March
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants



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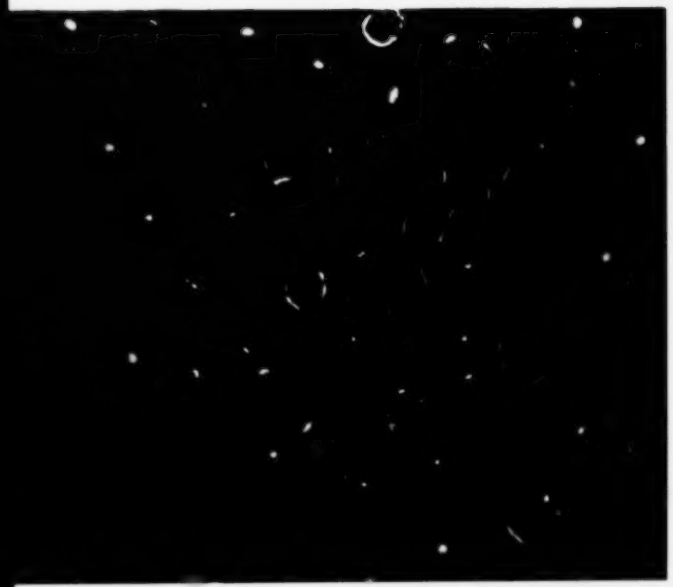
FIRETHORN
***Pyracantha* spp.**

Bird use: 16 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; evergreen shrubs, 6–15 ft. high; glossy green foliage; fragrant white flowers; showy orange to red fruits
Adaptations: Wide range of well-drained soils; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant
In bloom: March-April
In fruit: September-March
Sources: Commercial nurseries, seedlings, budding



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DOMESTIC CHERRY
***Prunus* spp.**
Montmorency cherry illus.

Bird use: 37 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; deciduous shrubs, small to large trees to 75 ft. tall; yellow leaves in fall; showy white flower clusters or drooping spikes; small bright-red to black fruit

Adaptations: Moderately deep to deep, well-drained, porous soils; sun to partial shade; not drought tolerant
In bloom: April-June
In fruit: Usually June-July but varies with species
Sources: Commercial nurseries

CURRANTS and GOOSEBERRIES
***Ribes* spp.**

Bird use: 23 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; deciduous and evergreen shrubs, 3–12 ft. high; pink, red, white, or yellow flowers; green, yellow, red, or black berries
Adaptations: Well-drained, moderately deep to deep, fertile soils; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant but not drought tolerant
In bloom: March-June
In fruit: July-September
Sources: Commercial nurseries; avoid wilding transplants

COTONEASTER
***Cotoneaster* spp.**

Bird use: 10 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; evergreen shrubs, 2–10 ft. high; planted as hedge or as ground cover; dark-green leaves, red-gold in fall; small pink or white flowers; showy red, orange, or black fruit
Adaptations: Well-drained, porous soils; sun to partial shade
In bloom: May-June
In fruit: September-November
Sources: Commercial nurseries

OREGON GRAPE
***Mahonia* spp.**

Bird use: 37 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; evergreen shrubs to 6 ft. high; yellow flowers in dense, spikelike clusters; blue-black fruit
Adaptations: Wide range of soils but prefers moderately well drained to well drained loam; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant but not drought tolerant
In bloom: March-May
In fruit: July-September
Sources: Commercial nurseries; wilding transplants

BLACKBERRY
***Rubus* spp.**

Bird use: 50 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; fast-growing, thorny shrubs; usually trailing and needing some kind of support; semi-erect kinds grow to 10 ft. high; red to black berries
Adaptations: Deep, well-drained, fertile soils; sun to partial shade; not cold or drought tolerant
In bloom: April-May
In fruit: July-October
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants

JUNIPER
***Juniperus* spp.**

Bird use: 30 species
Ornamental values: Many kinds; coniferous shrubs to 15 ft. high, trees to 40 ft.; dense, green to blue-green needles; small berrylike, dusty-blue cones
Adaptations: Wide range of soils; sun to partial shade; cold and drought tolerant
In bloom: April-May
In fruit: September-May
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants

SERVICEBERRY
***Amelanchier* spp.**

Bird use: 31 species
Ornamental values: Several kinds; deciduous shrubs to small trees, 12–35 ft. high; showy white flowers; small blue to purplish-black fruit
Adaptations: Wide range of soil conditions but prefers deep, well-drained, fertile soils; sun to partial shade; cold tolerant but not drought tolerant
In bloom: March-April
In fruit: July-September
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants

for assistance

You can get further information on plants, soils, and conservation methods at the office of your local soil and water conservation district. The Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, as part of its assistance to conservation districts, helps people apply many conservation practices that increase wildlife. County agents, commercial nurserymen, landscape architects, and bird societies can also help.

U.S. Department of Agriculture pamphlets that may be helpful are:

Making Land Produce Useful Wildlife (FB-2035)

More Wildlife Through Soil and Water Conservation (AIB-175)

Ponds and Marshes for Wild Ducks on Farms and Ranches in the Northern Plains (FB-2234)

Soil Conservation at Home (AIB-244)

Windbreaks for Conservation (AIB-339)

Conservation Practices—Signs of Good Hunting and Fishing (PA-1012)

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